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ABSTRACT

In this analysis of healing and conversion as two of the most notable and persistent traits of the new religious movements in Africa, healing is described as an indigenous religious category within the context of conversion as a modern permutation of African religion. Religious conversion is most strikingly represented in societies where the traditional religious culture continues to play a significant role. Thus, wherever traditional religious culture is no longer an important influence, religious conversion as a modern phenomenon is correspondingly scarce. The coincidence of the rise of new religious movements within areas of Western influence is seen not only as a result of the impact of Western influence but also as a result of indigenous local factors. Historical examples of traditional leaders and healers such as Joseph Babalola, Ma Mbele, George Khambule, Ma Nku, and Simon Kimbangu are traced. In these examples, modern permutations of conversion take place within the revised setting of the older heritage. In addition, procedures such as the use of ashes and water and Zionist practices are described to illustrate the evolution of traditional African religion into modern Christian practices. The document concludes with a brief recapitulation of the significance of new religious movements for the reform and modernization of African societies. (LH)

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Healing and Conversion in New Religious Movements in Africa:

Elements of an Indigenous Epistemology

Dr. Lamin Sanneh

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Healing and Conversion in New Religious Movements in Africa:
Elements of an Indigenous Epistemology

Dr Lamin Sanneh

"It is said that the Blacks were the first to teach mankind to worship the gods, to offer them sacrifices and to practise ceremonies and sacred rites, in sum, to perform all the religious actions by which men customarily honour the Deity; so they are famous throughout the world for their piety and the sacrifices offered by the Blacks are deemed to be the most acceptable to the Immortals. In this respect reference is made as witness to the oldest and most reputed poet of the Greeks who, in the Iliad, shows Jupiter and the other gods leaving for the country of the Blacks to attend the annual sacrifice and feast offered to them by the Blacks every year."

Diodorus of Sicily, Greek historian of 1st century B.C.

Healing and conversion are two of the most spectacular and persistent traits of new religious movements in Africa. Their analysis as a genuine facet of religious history is more than justified in any concern with modern Africa. The voluminous literature at present existing in the field should make this task relatively easy. What is, however, surprising is the comparative reluctance to take this religious theme seriously so that the authentically religious may be conceived as playing an important historical role. The causal analysis by which social scientists have in the main approached the subject has obscured the epistemological ground of indigenous religious perception and behaviour. To view external developments as causal factors in the emergence of new religious movements is to ignore the indisputable capacity of traditional societies to change from within and to assimilate new forces.

The approach in this paper is to set healing as an indigenous religious category within the context of conversion as a modern permutation. This should provide us with both the model and explanatory vehicle for assessing new religious movements. In the material at our disposal we are presented with the task of expounding conversion as a recent drama alongside healing as the established mode of spiritual efficacy in traditional culture. Conversion might be described in lofty revolutionary language, but the experience of healing to which it must point shackles it to the stately pace

of tradition. The fruits of modern experience are thus communicated by the familiar channels of inherited modes of perception. Robin Horton is right to believe that the intellectualist approach promises the most yield in this field¹, but I reckon he has given the game away by allowing an evolutionary sting to complete the tail of his particular gadfly. Others have also pointed out the complex variations that exist in traditional cosmologies² which Horton is apt to view in undifferentiated terms as comprising the 'microcosm' of tribal deities and the 'macrocosm' of notions of the Supreme Being. In this theory Christianity (or Islam³) merely stimulates developments in the macrocosm at the expense of the microcosm. While this approach in the end relativises traditional religions by offering them as cannon fodder to the inevitable march of secularism, my argument is that traditional societies cannot be uprooted in this wholesale manner, and that whatever the pressures for modernization they continue to feed from existing springs of self-affirmation. Healing is only one, though a significant element of such an ancient reflex. Dreams are another⁴. And so is prayer in its prognostic use.⁵ All these categories assume the epistemological reality of the world of religion. It has thus allowed African communities to handle new religious materials with unhesitating inventiveness. By a similar process secular materials have been adopted and adapted. Inherent value exists only as a human quality, and secularism itself is meaningful only by its human advocates whose discourse requires an act of faith of a kind to render it persuasive. However since this secular discourse arose as a detached reconceptualization of the religious vision, Africans desirous of discovering their roots would be more likely to look for them in the concentrated form of religious experience.

Dr Harold W. Turner, who has done much to advance research and study in this field, has alluded in one place to the modernizing role of new religious movements. He speaks of "the contribution to medical care through spiritual healing, the discipline for disoriented peoples when they have a new 'place to belong', the new trans-tribal unities ...the authentic indigenization of Christianity in many of the independent church forms and, in general, the great spiritual and mental shake-up that breaks through the confines of the old world-view and opens the way for new incentives, new visions of the future, new basic assumptions and values. These considerations", he continues, "reveal how the new religious movements...may in fact be making a most important contribution to the development and modernizing of their societies."⁶

A general picture may be constructed of the subject in Africa. The phenomenon of religious conversion is most strikingly represented in societies where the traditional religious culture continues to play a significant role. Wherever this religious culture is no longer an important influence, religious conversion as a modern phenomenon is

correspondingly scarce. Some other factors may influence this situation. Islam, for example, may succeed in weakening traditional religions and thus in suppressing any 'revivalist' potential in the culture.⁷ Consequently, areas of Islamic influence may appear roughly to correspond with the absence of conversion movements. Similarly, the active contact of the West, to think of a contrasting situation, may trigger a religious response and lead to the emergence of new religious movements. From this situation we may be tempted to conclude erroneously that conversion is a reaction to Western humiliation which Islam averted for its adherents.

The absence of significant conversion movements among, say, the Bambara of Mali or the Temne of Sierra Leone, areas influenced by Islam before colonialism, would appear to strengthen the case for Islam as an inhibiting factor. By contrast, the spectacular growth of new religious movements in South Africa might lend credence to the 'reaction' argument. But the defect of both these approaches is that they assign a determinist function to external factors and agents. One eminent writer concedes the case when he writes that Christianity provides the grammar and syntax and traditional customs the lexicon to produce the modern phenomenon of African Christian Ineependency.⁸ Yet it is clear in most of these movements that innovations were being made on the basis of pre-existing values and attitudes - and in this sense Horton is the victor. By an ironic contrast, those writers who saw most clearly that the new was in the service of the old were also those most concerned to view the old in the conspiratorial sense which in South Africa carries the inevitable implications of political suppression.⁹

The application of indigenous categories of perception and value should help us to escape the view of traditional societies as explicable by imported standards. The dramatic occurrence of new religious movements in a place like Yorubaland, where Islam had made a significant impression, suggests that the Islamic factor cannot on its own hold back the tide of religious revivalism. Conversely, the relative absence of movements of Christian Ineependency in much of French-ruled West Africa shows that Western contact alone cannot account for the phenomenon. Yet the coincidence of the rise of new religious movements with areas of Western influence demands an explanation. It would appear that the indigenous religious imagination was stirred to new life by the material of a new religious tradition (the vernacular Bible of Western missions) and its obvious cultural analogues and spiritual affinities. Thus the impact of the West need not be denied in order to retain indigenous initiative or to account for reform and change. Long before the coming of the West, African societies were subject to drastic change through climatic and environmental factors, historical events such as military movements and the waves of refugees that rose and fell on new shores, and the shifting fortunes of political states and trading patterns. All these produced

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corresponding changes in the religious traditions, as one detailed study of the ancient Mbona Cult in Malawi has shown.¹⁰ This history of adjusting to new experiences by marshalling into line the old order acquired a fresh impetus with the coming into being of new religious movements. The alarm expressed by some writers that many of these movements are only a diversionary facade for 'nativistic' revival shows what a liability the undervaluing of indigenous culture has introduced in our methodology.

The importance of local factors, both structural and personal, in stimulating movement in religious values and attitudes is enhanced by the complementary role of African materials. In much of the evidence we possess, the impression is created that the leading personalities embarked on their mission with great reluctance and after a dramatic intervention. Some of this emphasis is undoubtedly aimed at discouraging religious adventurism which must have existed to deserve this wariness in the sources. But it also suggests the outlines of an indigenous critique of the veracity of religious experience. It is a pervasive issue in the sources, though we may identify a few typical examples at this stage. One of the guiding spirits of the 'Aladura' revival movement between 1928 and 1930 in Yorubaland was Joseph Babalola. He was employed in the Public Works Department as a driver of a steam-roller on road construction. It was while he was working that his engine seized. He then heard a voice calling his name three times with the command to go and preach the Gospel. Babalola returned home armed with a bell and the message that prayer and the 'water of life' (omo iye) would cure all sickness. He entered the town naked and covered with ashes and was appropriately taken to be mad and promptly put in prison for two weeks.¹¹

In the case of Joseph Babalola it was a seized engine which overcame his resistance and made him relent. We should also notice the manner in which his name was repeated to him three times, an emphasis which established in his own mind that his fundamental identity was not in doubt where it mattered, whatever his reduced significance as a replaceable source of casual labour. Furthermore, the major changes taking place in his traditional environment must have had their effect in 'the shaking of the foundations'. The experience of riding the road-roller and seeing the rough earth levelled under him must have played a part in awakening him to a notion of a spiritual power which can level and bring order to the bestrewn pieces of ancient religious values. The name as the instrument by which the objective self exists might become the means of a subjective enlightenment. This is a well-known religious principle. The intrusion of a modern road into a traditional village symbolized for Babalola and his types the irreversible speed with which modernity would impinge on ancient Africa, and only a correspondingly swift religious carriage

could keep pace. Appearing naked and covered with ashes before an astonished people, Babalola symbolized the bewilderment of traditional Africa on the threshold of modernity, and for remedy he combined the heraldic appeal of the bell with the healing quality of 'the water of life' as signs of a new religious order. Conversion, and healing as its efficacious token were brought together in the person of the prophet. Babalola claimed that the smallpox epidemic that afflicted the village people shortly after their rejection of him was a punishment for his treatment. The sickly appearance of his ash-covered body thus foreshadowed the coming affliction of his people. What smallpox did to the body modernity would do to the human spirit. And just as retreat into hygienic quarantine is impossible before the one, so is religious disengagement suicidal before the other. The prophet is the via negativa to the new dispensation. Babalola's road engine would not trample on the community's sacred objects and memories. It would instead seize at the approach of an invisible chariot.

This theme of retreat and approach is represented in one story concerning the rout of ancient tradition by the forces of modernity. The story is told of a gentle oracular spirit, the widow of a long-deceased Alaye of the village of Efon, who lived a solitary but contented life in the forest near the village. In the early 1920s Christianity and new schools and roads began opening up the place. The oracle was disturbed. In 1927 she told the reigning Alaye, Aladejare, that "her pot of indigo dye had been broken by the new road, and that she was leaving Efon to return no more."¹² It was a retreat which neither saved her sacred pot nor halted the advance of the modern world. She represents many of those who had confided in sacred vessels of tradition only to have them smashed by an aggressive modernity. But she is also typical of the inability of solitary and marginal people to face major challenge. The disorientation of refugee groups in African society is a dramatic recapitulation of the fate of the widow of Efon.

To return to the subject of reluctance to embark on the religious vocation, we are told of the story of a Zulu Zionist leader, Ma Mbele (b. 1904). She had a revelation in 1940 in which she was told to heal the sick. She ignored the summons for more than ten years. Then in 1951 she passed through an unconscious state and had a vision. God told her: "I need you as a Healer and Helper of many."¹³ That terse message achieved its purpose and her resistance was overcome. She subsequently founded a community dedicated to spiritual healing. But she retained her reputation as a shy and withdrawn person.¹⁴ In the concentrated message as she received it, the gift of healing was clearly the operative context of religious truth. Even faith as a personal conviction appears missing from the material.

The founder of the Church of the Saints in South Africa, George Khambule (1884-1949)

emerged into prominence after a prolonged period of determined resistance. Only a personal tragedy brought about his eventual capitulation. In 1918 a great influenza epidemic engulfed the world. Coming so soon after Halley's comet of 1911 (another is due in 1986, two years after the year of the modern pre-millennium) the epidemic was interpreted as the dawn of the apocalypse. John Mtanti (1873-1937) was one of those gripped by the fever of expectancy; and in 1919 he saw in a dream what he must do to build Zion as a spiritual refuge for his people. In 1931 he went public with his message, which included a detailed sketch of the architectural symmetry of Heaven, something in fact of an enterprising blend of modern Cathedral style building and the traditional Zulu homestead. His confidence boosted, Mtanti resigned his job as a school-teacher after he had unsettled his pupils by appearing in the wild garb of an Old Testament prophet and exclaiming 'Nakho! Nakho!' - 'Woe, woe!'¹⁵ Only the new Jerusalem, he felt, could now avert the fearful fate that hung over the world, and at that point a suitable dream admonished him to seek out the man who was to found the Church of the Saints, George Khambule.

George Khambule had been a mine captain in Johannesburg. He was barely literate, and in the world in which he struggled to make a living he would be considered inferior to John Mtanti. But in the upside-down logic of the spiritual Zion, Mtanti looked up to him as the greater instrument by which the Heavenly Jerusalem would take earthly proportions. George demured. But shortly after this his woman friend in Johannesburg died after a brief illness, and George was shaken by the experience. He fell ill consequently and was taken to hospital. He lost physical consciousness one evening, regaining it at 4 in the morning. In that time he recounted how he had visions of his woman friend and his sister, both dead. He saw his sister crying

"and saw the angels of Satan with their forks about to push the dead into the fire. Then Jesus appeared - Khambule was now in heaven, the two of them were looking from above down at the earth and its central point, Telezini. He saw there his own corpse, foul and smelling, and his wife crying beside it."¹⁶

By the time the vision ceased, Khambule had been given a detailed Levitical code concerning ritual purity. When he rose from this experience the question no longer was whether but how soon he could reach home in Telezini. Eventually a stone temple was erected, and Telezini, the obscure spot on maps of the Native Reserves, was now bathed in the elevated light of Zion.

The use of dreams and visions and other unusual types of religious experience to rebuke doubt and induce compliance is so widespread that it cannot be adequately followed in this limited discussion. Another equally major theme is the matter of

physical mobility: people on the move or travelling away from home may be particularly prone to religious experience. But the thematic converse of this may also hold: people making a habit of retiring to a familiar spot for meditation or rest may come to a new religious experience.

Certain other theoretical issues may be introduced at this stage of the exposition. The concept of healing is given a lot of space in the sources. One general view is that human beings are encircled by a hostile world in which evil forces run amock. Healing is the state of preservation from this world, which means that both the physically ill and the able-bodied require 'treatment' to offset evil and establish a favourable balance. Healing then becomes the durable sign of the victory of good over evil. The slight tendency to propounding a dualist notion of the world in which good and evil are evenly balanced is qualified and restricted by the possibility of healing. Religious faith is the appropriate posture to adopt in a complex and cruel world, for it opposes to the forces of destruction the living power of hope in another, better world. It is by this living power that we have to explain the entire phenomenon of new religious movements. This power becomes efficacious in healing and in its experience the rank and file are made to participate in a community of equal access. The common experience of disenchantment and of the burden of life's enigmas is transmuted into a mass catharsis of deliverance through the crucible of conversion. In Soweto, for example, there are Faith Healing 'Fountains' around which people congregate at night. "Nobody is asked whether he or she is Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, 'A.M.E.' or Zionist. At the Fountain, 'The Lake of Peace', all are alike: the same anxiety about health and wholeness; the same trust in that blessed water which they are given to take home."¹⁷ In one sense healing gathers people from the margins of a diminished existence and brings them into a fuller relationship. But it does not fabricate a non-existent community. Healing is returning a person to a state of natural wholeness which had once existed and ensuring that others are as effectively covered.

In some areas this might acquire the significance of an ecological harmony. Isaiah Shembe (d.1935), one of the most remarkable of the leaders of new religious movements and founder in 1911 of the Church of the Nazarites in Zululand, taught a deep reverence for nature and an awesome awareness of her suffering. He admonished his sons not to cut a branch of a tree: "How would you feel if I were to cut one of your fingers from your hand?"¹⁸ He similarly condemned cruelty to animals.¹⁹

The practice of healing often allows women to play a critical role. Two redoubtable women leaders, Ma Nku (b. 1894) and Ma Mbele, both specialized in healing. They attend above all to mental disorders (ufufunyane) and, a particularly serious type, isinyanya, and other forms of hysterical illness. Before a healing service an animal

is sacrificed to increase the healing power. Ma Mbele would first 'baptize' the animal before it is sacrificed. Later the bones are burned to produce highly valuable ashes are mixed in a tub with consecrated water and the sacrificial blood, and then placed in the vestry. The mixture is held to be particularly effective against demon-possession.²⁰ In a different example water and ashes are served in a mixture as a prescription for those suffering from a hysteric disorder (isipoliyana).²¹

In one example the diagnostic procedure is used to reinforce the therapeutic use of healing. Offences against the sexual code are first determined and then prescribed for. Ashes and Sunlight soap are mixed with water and then dispensed. The ashes are obtained from an altar built according to measurements laid down in the Book of Exodus Chapters 30 and 38. Cattle would be carefully selected and 'baptized' by the prophet of the new church (in this instance St John's Apostolic Church of Swaziland). The water which is used is taken from underneath a rock. The prophet rubs the head of the client with the mixture while praying at the same time.²²

Water and ashes are clearly significant ritual elements, and in the context of religious healing or spiritual purification they carry great power. Babalola had stumbled on a major resource. When the setting is a flowing stream in the open where numbers can be multiplied then we have public drama of major proportions. In this particular story we are also confronted with a discreet if ubiquitous theme, namely, the encounter of new religious movements with African traditional religions. On that point, the story is a warning about placing excessive confidence in the capacity of the new to overwhelm the old.

At dawn two groups of worshippers arrive at a stream. The first is a group of traditional religious worshippers led by Dlakude, a woman. Her followers dance round her as the entire party run downhill towards the stream, chanting old sacred songs. On the opposite bank is a rival group of worshippers, some dressed in white with green or yellow sashes. They are members of the Sabbath Zionist Church led by Prophet Elliot Butelezi. They are also running and dancing round the prophet as they move along. They are singing a Christian hymn.

The Christian party is preceded at the stream by the traditional religious party. All the members of the party have brought their calabashes and when these have been filled with water some medicine is mixed with it and then rigorously stirred until it foams. The leader gives each to drink from it and they begin to vomit. Meanwhile the Zionists look on silently except when Elliot Butelezi, perhaps sensing that his passive role in all of this might be construed as an inadequacy, asks Dlakude a rhetorical question: "When are you going to finish, preacher?"²³ The Zionist party, given that formal lead, respond with amused laughter. Dlakude takes no notice, intent

on completing the ritual vomiting. She then finds some white clay with which she smears herself and her followers. A short sacred song follows and the whole group begins to leave the stream for Dlakude's kraal. She leads the group in a recessional dance, beating them with branches as they run home.

It is now the turn of the Zionists. One of the group complains that the water has been defiled from Dlakude entering it, a veiled criticism of Butelezi's allowing Dlakude to steal the show and to push the Zionists into secondary importance. But Butelezi is reassuring, saying that the vigorous flow of the stream has removed any impurity. He intones a hymn which the assembly of worshippers take up, and then he blesses the water. He dips his finger in the stream and stirs it. He looks up to the sky and says a short prayer to the Lord of the Living Waters that the stream may be cleansed of vile things. A sick member of the group is brought to Butelezi by a prayer-woman. He scoops water into the patient's mouth, shouting at the same time the Trinitarian formula. Then he assures the patient: "This blessed water will take away illnesses from this sick person. Drink!"²⁴

Butelezi then takes the patient into the middle of the stream and makes the woman stoop until the water covers her head. He puts his hands over her head and immediately goes into a possession phase. His body shakes and he shouts in rising tones. The patient drinks repeatedly from the water, praying in the intervals for the Spirit to descend like a dove. Soon she also goes into possession to the accompaniment of hymn-singing by the worshippers. The sick woman emerges from the water and starts to vomit on the rocks.

Other patients succeed her in the water, going through an identical process of purification and ending with vomiting. Following this Butelezi takes some white ashes which he mixes with water into a paste. He rubs the patients' faces and shoulders with the mixture. He then ties green sashes round their shoulders. In a procession Butelezi leads the Zionists home, all of them singing and dancing.²⁵

It is clear that the two groups of worshippers are remarkable more by similarities in what they think divides them than in what they feel unites them. Zionist advocates in South Africa and in West Africa would strenuously deny they have anything in common with Dlakude and her types. But we would be ill-advised to put much trust in such ideological contentions. In the area of actual practice the bond is much closer and the lines of demarcation much harder to draw. The practice of Dlakude and her party in fact provides the rule of clarification for what followed in Elliot Butelezi and his groups of Zionists. The new religious movement was clearly riding on the back of the old. If Dlakude were to go out of business there is no doubt who would lay a firm claim to her mantle. If

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her followers were subsequently to cross over to the other side, as Elliot Butelezi and his acolytes have obviously done, they might find it difficult to deny the debt they owe. Religious and social renewal might thus come to mean the indispensable necessity of a significant carry-over of pre-existing models. The Waziri of Sokoto, Alhaji Junaidu, in an address to a convocation of the Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria in 1971 expressed similar sentiments when he exhorted the students and the general University community to remember that they could only make a meaningful life for themselves in the modern world if they previously recognized an indebtedness to the sources of traditional value in their own communities. He cautioned against an uncritical espousal of change, saying:-

"Wise men know that change is part of the necessary processes through which all societies must pass if they are to grow and to survive in an improved state. Wiser men know that change can have other faces whose influence might well lead to the impoverishment of the very society we wish to nourish...It is little wonder that our...modern elite...violate the very laws and principles which they themselves create. When your own world has been put aside, you feel no respect for any other." ²⁶

Research into this question has to proceed much further before we can predict the final outcome of the confluence of the old and the new. Yet even at this stage two things stand out clearly. In the first place we cannot continue to use prejudged charts to navigate the course of African Christian Independency and the twin tributaries of charismatic revivalism and Ethiopian militancy that have carried it forward. In the second place there can be little question of the profound influence of the older religious materials in setting the course and infusing pace into developments in the field. In watching Dlakude's movements carefully, Elliot Butelezi might indeed suggest a methodological principle by which we should ourselves approach the subject. His own arrival at the stream was almost made to appear as if it was at Dlakude's prompting. The 'stirring of the waters' ²⁷ of that and other streams may have the effect one day of prompting a similar process of academic purification with regard to the self-perception of traditional African communities.

"Water Church" is how one leader describes the new religious movement over which he presides. ²⁸ By that name he has highlighted the central preoccupation with the element. Western contact by virtue of its religion and politics has placed a premium on indigenous values. Christianity provided the access route par excellence with the introduction of the vernacular Scriptures, though the consequent creation of a Water Church was hardly the motive for Scriptural translation even if it is its indisputable result. Those who attend the Water Church are convinced that the pool around which

they congregate is inhabited by snakes, crocodiles and the evil works of Satan. The world as a hostile environment is thus recalled, with water serving the role of ritual scapegoat for the hazards and traumas of existence. The Biblical pool of Bethesda (John 5) is thus transposed into its numerous local equivalents into which, like the bulging lagoons of African cities, are discharged the effluents of floating populations. Personal purification reverses this process of physical deterioration, and in its collective form provides a symbolic bond of rehabilitation and integration. The challenge thus for the new religious movements is to demonstrate that they possess the resources to diagnose and prescribe for the African condition. Many therefore plunge into newly available Christian materials to take the measure of the deep longing for physical wholeness and spiritual consolation. The prophet approaches the evil-infested pool carrying a bucket of ashes. He is quickly reminded of the grave risks that lurk in the water. He breaks into a prayer and waves his staff, symbol of prophetic office, and with that scatters the imaginary forces that has established tutelage over the pool. He then prays for peace in the water, and entreats the Angel of the Waters to descend with power and cleansing into the pool and thereby remove all the dangers.²⁹

An indispensable resource is thus regenerated and made available to fill a correspondingly extensive need. Bottles are brought to the pool and filled with the precious element and given to the mothers in the gathering. Some ninety-six children, aged from one to seven, are then taken from their mothers and plunged in the water three times. The symbolic stages of this ritual, contrasting the separation and reunion of kin, transmute the painful experience of economic and political alienation which Zion would transcend. The children were handled by a woman leader who turned their frantic crying and gasping into a justification for upbraiding the mothers, charging that it was because the women had not confessed their sins that their children were distressed. Adults followed where children led, going in turn through the purification exercises.

The hazards of which the prophets are warned by their followers may be proved to exist even if takes a tragedy to secure the point. The bishop of a new religious movement in Johannesburg in 1943 once chased Satan into the baptismal pool, wielding his pastoral staff as a spear. He followed the enemy deep into the pool, leaving his followers to recount the story subsequently of how he fought valiantly with the enemy who blocked his exit with an immovable rock.³⁰ His death confirmed the view that the world is menaced by hostile forces, all the more sinister for being invisible. The treachery of the pool is the reason for shifting the main battlefront there. In that combat only the spiritually trained could engage the enemy. (I am impressed in these stories by the notion of the category of divine affliction which ascribes to treachery

or tragedy the not unrecognizable face of a frowning providence. The sun in some glorious crisis of the dominance of noon or the distress of nightfall receives the appropriate tribute of sacrifice. The skies in some dark passage of time heave and convulse with thunder and the forked lightning and thus elicit a divine compliment. The sombre march of waves or the reflective stillness of the waters deserve the obsequies of Neptune. All this proves that humans also stand under the 'left hand of God' and taste of His inscrutable doublesidedness. The drowning of a Zionist prophet is not the solution to the mystery of evil, but the sign that its reality is undeniable. It deserves recognition in any sober reckoning, and no setting is more appropriate than that of an uninhibited religious environment.)

Surrounded by a panoply of hostile and evil forces the prophets and prophetesses of the new religious movements adorn themselves with a colourful assortment of ritual garments and symbols of authority in order to blunt the sharpness of the contact with these forces. Sacred pools must similarly be cautiously approached, with the final contact preceded by a series of ritual acts to deflect enemy assault. Prayers of exorcism may shackle the enemy; the ritual act of circumambulating the pool may pin down the monsters of the deep; the symbolic staffs may cast a shadow over the waters and blind Satan. All this entails huge demands on existing resources. Then the larger society has to be faced, for it also undoubtedly contains equally serious hazards, with the agents of modernization enthroned behind their iron masks.³¹ Faced with these problems, an imaginative religious leader might contrive an enterprising permutation, capitalize on the situation and engage a technological device to mobilize the vintage craft of tradition. One leader, Ma Nku, already described, decided to do precisely that. At the annual meeting of the Church huge quantities of water were dispensed in buckets and bottles for the pilgrims to take home for future use. The rising demand for the element had to be met, and so Ma Nku installed an electric water pump on the Church premises.³² When modernity fills the vessels of need in this uncharacteristic fashion, then there is room to accommodate the hand of providence. In its characteristic impact modernity is pretty unfeeling and insatiable.

The interest in the ritual and healing power of water is raised by some leaders into a major theological subject, as was the case with Pastor J. Ade Aina of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Yorubaland. He wrote a short theological exposition of the significance of water in the 1930s at the height of the 'Aladura' revival.³³ It is not necessary to repeat such theological material in order to appreciate that an ancient theme has been released in the propitious setting of the vernacular Bible. A return to ethnic consolation is not only now possible but, with Abraham, Moses, Aaron, David and Daniel goading the ancestors of the race to attempt greater things in accents

of native dignity, it becomes unavoidable. This is the aspect I will next attempt to sketch out.

The new religious movements have often sought legitimacy by an authoritative appeal to tradition, with the important adoption of rules of sartorial propriety, social etiquette and standards of ethical conduct. Joseph Babalola, for example, is summoned by ringing tones to affirm the efficacy of tradition in omo iye. The widow of Efon meets the effrontery of an unsolicited modernity by turning her back on it. Such fidelity to tradition might create the impression that no serious change is involved in some of the new religious movements. But that only assumes a 'staircase' view of human progress and social development. Change might also mean that a wilting plant has started bearing fruit because the roots are sound. When it is cut down and hewn into planks the tree has 'changed' only to die.

Paul Nzuza (1896-1959), leader of a Zionist church, received his call in May 1916 while he was visiting the grave of King Shaka, the great Zulu nationalist hero.³⁴ The official constitution of the church described how Paul Nzuza was enveloped by the Holy Spirit and chosen along with his followers to be the "elected family of Jehova God according to the texture of their skin and hair."³⁵ Another was Timothy Cekwane (1873-1949). After Halley's comet appeared he and his followers assembled on the top of a mountain to await the Spirit. Here is a description of what happened:-

"They felt the Spirit coming over them like a mighty wind. They ran over the mountain; they screamed; they sensed an irresistible urge to take off charms and amulets from their wrists, and their medicines...; they had to confess their sins before God and men, in an outpouring of the soul in which nothing was to be left hidden. The branches of the bushes from the Mountain they gathered and beat themselves and one another, driving out the demons.

"In that spirit-filled night on the Mountain, Timothy was gripped by an ecstasy that overpowered him. Gesticulating and gyrating as if intoxicated by the Spirit, he prayed and screamed in an unknown tongue. He opened his hands... he saw blood trickling from the palms of his hands... Water was brought to him; as he prayed... it turned into blood. This sacred fluid was powerful, filled with healing qualities for the sick."³⁶

The significance of blood was quickly grasped by Cekwane. Others might see in it a duplicate of the stigmata and the reference to Christ. He, on the other hand, derived a much more specific meaning from it. This was clear when he designated his son as successor in the symbolic words: "He is my blood. He is I."³⁷ A natural extrapolation that reinforces communion with Shaka's spirit as the primordial kin. It was in that

exalted company that Paul Nzuza arrived at his vision of Zion. Timothy Cekwane for his part fixed on posterity the mantle of responsibility which he gathered round the loins of kinship.

In one poem the two themes of posterity and the ancestors are fused and saturated with notes of a harsh existence. The author is Isaiah Shembe of the Nazarites.

You lass of Nazaretha,
cry like a flowing stream
because of the shame which is yours
in your own country.

You lad of Nazaretha,
cry like a rapid stream
because of the shame which has come over you,
you lad of Shaka.³⁸

One of the most significant and complex of new religious movements was that founded by Simon Kimbangu (1889-1951) in Lower Zaire in 1921.³⁹ The Kimbanguist Church claims about one million adherents and was admitted as a member of the World Council of Churches in 1969/70. As we saw with Elliot Butelezi, many of the new prophets are inclined to distinguish themselves sharply from their immediate traditional religious context. Garrick Braide (1882-1918) of the Niger Delta was one such.⁴⁰ Another was Prophet William Wade Harris, a Liberian who worked along the coast from western Ghana (Apollonia) to Liberia between 1914 and 1916.⁴¹ All these great religious figures depended for their and effectiveness on the strength of the African religious tradition, whatever their protestations to the contrary. Kimbangu was no exception, whatever major permutations he introduced into Congolese society. He consciously held up the light of the ancestors to illuminate for his followers the path of renewal. One contemporary witness observes: "Neither Kimbangu nor his apostles have ever appealed for ancestor worship to be abandoned; their tombs were kept clean, paths leading to them were laid out and their return to life was going to initiate the Golden Age."⁴² The culture of ritual veneration, of communion with the spirits of the dead and of sacrifice which has existed in virtually all African societies producing new religious movements explains a great deal of the attitude of the new religious leaders. One poem describes this with compelling power:-

~~"The dead have never left us. They are among us. The dead are everywhere:~~

They are in the shadow as it clears.

The dead are not below the ground:

They are in the rustling tree.

They are in the moaning forest.

They are in the running water.

They are in the still water.

They are in the huts, they are in the crowds.

The dead are not dead:

They are in the woman's breast.

They are in the wailing child

And in the log as it bursts into flames.

The dead are not below the ground:

They are in the dying fire.

They are in the dripping shrubs.

They are in the whining rocks.

They are in the forest, they are in the home.

The dead are everywhere."⁴³

Those verses bring together several major concerns: the psychology of the human personality; the unbroken bond of kinship between child, woman and man as well as between the dead and the living; the link between social wellbeing and the state of the natural environment; the strong sense of ecological balance between the just demands of living through consuming the fruits of nature ('the log as it bursts into flames') and replenishing the stock (nature is alive with the spirits of the dead: 'the dead are everywhere'). In this scheme the whole is at stake in the parts and the parts encapsulate the life of the whole. For this reason community solidarity and individual fulfilment are responsive chords of the same theme, so that social and historical events are the consequences of the mutual interplay of individual enterprise and community legitimacy. The 'who' of individual identity and the 'where' of interpersonal relationships are in creative tension.

The Kimbanguist Church has similarly preserved the tradition of kin responsibility by officially observing the birthdays of Kimbanguist's three sons. As one present-day leader puts it: "The sons of the prophet are for us the vanguard of Christ. They are concerned with our spiritual and material problems. In them, the prophet still lives

for us..."⁴⁴ It would seem here and elsewhere that the route along which the new message is transmitted, i.e., Kimbangu and his successor-sons, has become inseparable from the ultimate destination. Here also the modern permutation of conversion takes place within the revived setting of the older heritage. In the successful combination of this heritage and religious conversion new ideas and styles of living emerge which carry forward individual and communal wellbeing. The role of the natural environment in this revitalization process should not be lost sight of.

One example must suffice to show the important place that nature occupies in African traditional religions. The great missionary explorer, Dr David Livingstone, unbowed by the strange unfamiliarity of the dark continent, decided to engage a Tswana speaker in a theological duel. He asked the local man what he understood by the word for 'holiness', boitsepho. Then came this refreshing answer:-

"When copious showers have descended during the night, and all the earth and leaves and cattle are washed and clean, and the sun rising shows a drop of dew on every blade of grass, and the air breathes fresh, that is holiness."⁴⁵

Such an aesthetic appreciation of holiness, a logical extension of traditional reverence for nature, should be relevant for projects of modernization in Africa. A pleasant and life-imparting environment is indispensable to the quality of life, and in its traditional understanding transcended artificial barriers of class and rank. Stewardship of nature is a concomitant of a sense of fidelity to kin.

The final theme must be the urban-rural dichotomy. Here the missionary part of the story is of critical importance, for by paying close attention to the sources and modes of African religious values, missionaries were within range of affecting the foundations of African perception. Since traditional religions constituted the most developed epistemological resources, their modification would have reverberations throughout the culture. It is a vast subject, but we may content ourselves with two brief examples. Dr Livingstone's challenge to his Tswana companion had assumed that theological abstraction would be unknown or rudimentary among Africans, which would justify him in his wish to bring Africans to a sense of realism about the right division between myth and science. In other words to clear the way by which secularism might enter indigenous consciousness. His assumption did not remain unstated for long. He encountered a traditional rainmaker whose profession he tried to expose to the corrective light of reason. He accused the rainmaker of charlatanry, saying the diviner waited for rain clouds before using his medicine so as to claim the credit for having brought rain. The rainmaker rose to his challenge, saying: "We are both doctors and not deceivers. You give a patient

medicine. Sometimes God is pleased to heal him by means of your medicine. Sometimes not - he dies. When he is cured, you take the credit for what God does. I do the same. Sometimes God grants us rain, sometimes not. When he does, we take the credit of the charm. When a patient dies you don't give up trust in your medicine. Neither do I when no rain falls."⁴⁶ Logical exposition is obviously a slippery instrument which the adversary might skillfully seize against us. The rainmaker's claim of a professional solidarity with his missionary visitor (a similar solidarity is claimed by another enterprising local man with an early 17th century traveller⁴⁷) closes the distance implied in Dr Livingstone's whole approach and creates a logical scenario which the missionary is challenged to repudiate at the cost of his faith in a Supreme Being. Few would willingly grasp that nettle.

Our second example concerns a missionary who decided to take the law into his own Hands. The missionary in question was resident in the village of Hastings near Freetown, Sierra Leone. Hastings was highly regarded in missionary circles as a showcase of Christian piety and locally was given the epithet, 'the Bethlehem of West Africa'.⁴⁸ Consequently when the Engungun masquerade secret society began asserting its authority over the place in a public procession, the missionary went out to meet it head on. The story of that dramatic encounter is relished - and probably embellished - in the local accounts. The missionary fell on the masked figure and began physically to attack it. Obviously he had to accept that he was fighting a real not a mythological enemy. But "he only flogged a mass of empty Egugu clothes. The bodies inside the clothes had mysterious...vanished. The missionary marched back to the Parsonage; his whip had dropped, but a broom belonging to one of the...Egugu escorts followed him to the Parsonage, gyrating, in fact executing a little dance of its own behind the worthy Cleric's back."⁴⁹

Standard interpretations of this story settle squarely on missionary intolerance or, equally misleading, on the predilection of Africans for mythologising life. The real significance of such stories, however, can only be uncovered by submitting them to traditional epistemological criteria.

It is clear that in the story the missionary was being challenged to do spiritual combat on a ground not of his choosing. However we define his role, whether as the disguised front of Western secularism or the lofty representative of a Scriptural religion, the missionary was compelled to acquit himself in the language and style recognized by the local people. He produced the Bible, much as a cult object, and flourished it in the face of the pursuing broom which consequently fled from the scene, leaving the missionary unharmed. Convinced that he had demonstrated the superiority of Christianity, the missionary had missed the clear implication

that Christianity could engage indigenous traditions only by itself being transformed into familiar epistemological categories. The Bible as a symbol of spirit power was drawn alongside the gyrating broom infused with similar power. At his place of residence, the missionary was within the proper limits of the spirit power of the Bible, with the retreating broom conceding the point. Thus Engungun and Christianity, at least in local perception, were debating and competing within a common epistemological discourse, rather than about whether such a discourse existed at all. The real conquest was on ground prepared by Engungun. As Christianity moved into that territory it was radically transformed to meet perceived needs. Before that point, it was embodied in the Parsonage which rested on the double margins of physical isolation and symbolic alienation. Dr Livingstone got off comparatively lightly considering where he started.

The phenomenon of the Engungun broom may be related to the claim of a Zionist worshipper, Aaron Mjwara, who once declared in a worship context: "Elijah was given a broom on the mountains. My calling is to be the besom of God. The House of Africa has been perfected through the Broom. It is perfected."⁵⁰ In the accomplished hands of domestic servants and field labourers, both prey to the forces inherent in the urban-rural tension, perhaps the broom should sooner or later acquire an elevated destiny. But in West Africa at least it has more respectable pedigree.

The rural factor is an important structural issue in the rise and development of new religious movements. The rural exodus into towns creates a class of disenchanted Africans who may constitute a captive audience for the movements. The movements themselves become a line of defence against ultimate wretchedness. Inadequate or inappropriate education, the economics of low wages and seasonal labour, the elitist basis of modern medicine, the slide into the synthetic culture of drugs, alcoholism, prostitution and gambling that afflict the urban poor, all this creates fertile ground for religious initiative. When rural migrants find themselves adrift in decaying inner-cities, their only form of relief might come from such religious initiative being taken for them and by them. Religion is often quite simply the last foothold before the precipice of final hopelessness.

Urban life, even for those who succeed in finding jobs, may engender wrong attitudes. Two may be identified. First, an antagonistic attitude may develop towards village life and values. Second, the money economy which fuels town life rewards individual performance and so places no value on community goals. Such an atomized view of life throws the individual on his own resources, thus leaving him with no meaningful context. Because economic rewards can never offset the loss of many other advantages associated with the older life-style, the rural migrant compensates for this often in negative terms.

The new religious movements are acutely aware of the nature of the challenge they face with regard to the impoverishment of rural areas. The parasitic dependence of town dwellers on the rural populations for food and raw materials has resulted in fact in the candle being consumed at both ends. Rural wealth is sucked away into the towns where rural labour is attracted and exploited without any corresponding compensation. The loss to the rural sector is obvious. But the towns themselves are not immune. Without a replenished source of food supply, raw materials and a productive workforce, growth and development are stunted. The loss to the urban sector is equally clear.

It is partly for this reason that some new religious movements have proceeded to place great value on the rural roots of the people. Many of the early precursors in fact began by retracing their rural roots. For example, in 1900 one Shadrach Mogun arose from Ekiti country in Yorubaland. He had been baptized by the Church Missionary Society agent, Rev Hinderer. A contemporary report described him thus: 'He lives alone with Jesus Christ - to use his own expression... He preaches to the farmers, and now and again visits the town to preach. He looks like an Old Testament prophet, and is a veritable John the Baptist preparing the way for Christ's second advent.'⁵¹ A second example is Egunjobi, a hunter also from Ekiti country. He came to Ibadan after 1900 and was baptized at the local Baptist church in 1907. About 1912 while he was hunting north of Ibadan he said he had a vision of an angel shining in the dark. The charms which were hung about him (for he is described as being 'powerful in juju') began to jangle terribly, and fell off. The angel told him of God's anger and prophesied coming war and epidemic. Egunjobi turned his gun upside down and water poured out, a sign of rebuke, he believed, at his obstinacy. The angel bade him preach and then disappeared, leaving a footmark in the rock. After a year of hesitation, Egunjobi was troubled in his sleep by dreams until he was eventually driven to start preaching. His message was apocalyptic and emphasized the power of prayer. He practised healing by mixing herbs with water and adding a Psalm to be recited, saying it was the power of Jesus that healed. He went to Lagos in 1918 to preach and thereafter disappeared from public notice. He probably died in the 1920s.⁵²

A third example of a charismatic figure to appear in this style is Moses Orimolade. He was born in the 1870s at Ikare, also in Yoruba country, where Christianity was introduced in the late 1890s. Orimolade was an early convert. He fell seriously ill for seven years, but after a vision and taking the waters of a nearby stream he made a partial recovery though he remained lame for the rest of his

life. He became a wandering preacher in spite of that handicap. In 1916 he arrived at the C.M.S. church in Owo, and later travelled as far as Kano and Jos. At the Yoruba Muslim town of Ilorin further south he built a prayer-house and was known locally as Alhaaji-n-Yisa (Yisa being the local name for Jesus). Later a leading Lagos Muslim trader took him in because he was "a holy man". "The power of prayer was his constant theme."⁵³

In the origins of the extremely successful new religious movement, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), the rural factor is again to the fore. The founder, Josiah Olunowo Oshitelu (d.1966), had his base in the small village of Ogere where he began his public religious career in June, 1929. Ogere was to emerge into international prominence as the headquarters of the movement which began to spread to other parts of West Africa, Britain and the United States. It was made accessible to a far larger audience by a two-volume study published by the Oxford University Press.⁵⁴ In Oshitelu's case he explicitly combined a role in the world of traditional culture with a strong sense of vocation in the new. In 1941 he had conferred on him the title, Doctor of the Psychical, by the National Union of Spiritualists of Nigeria. Traditional healers had obviously discovered a kindred soul. Such recognition need not be that explicit to be acknowledged as an influence with other religious leaders.

A major conceptual innovation still waits to be made in the area of the rural factor in historical and cultural change. In the most significant examples of movements of reform and renewal in Africa and elsewhere we are dealing with the critical impact of rural ideas of society on urban styles of living. Alongside the comparative boundary of the convergence of Western influence and traditional cultures an important related corridor has opened up in the urban-rural nexus. It would be necessary to shake down the category of the 'millenium' in order to grasp the ideological seriousness implicit in rural critique of town life. It is a phenomenon that can be traced back into the mists of antiquity. Its dramatic manifestation in the new religious movements of today provides a unique opportunity for learning about motives for change and renewal and their sources in rural life. The great Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), writing in the fourteenth century, confidently called attention to this question. He wrote: "Thus, the group feeling (asabiyah) that goes with (common descent) likewise is (stronger). It draws those who have it to desert life and the avoidance of cities, which do away with bravery and make people dependent upon others. This should be understood and the proper conclusions be drawn from it."⁵⁵

It is easy, if forgiveable, to see the new religious movements as encouraging an uncritical approval of traditional African values. Polygamy springs to mind here. Yet both George Khambule and Simon Kibangu developed a stern anti-polygamy code, and in Khambule's case he went to the uncharacteristic extreme of espousing celibacy.⁵⁶ Most of the movements in fact rivet on their followers the heavy chains of discipline and self-denial, requiring sometimes superhuman feats of personal endurance as a prerequisite for full membership. In this connection the work ethic may be rescued from its inferior associations and promoted as a necessary principle of salvation. In the church founded by Isaiah Shembe, for example, the morning liturgy "contains the most uncompromising, unrelenting and persevering exhortation to work, and against laziness."⁵⁷ This muscular religion was addressed to an agricultural community following the Natives Land Act of 1913. The address called on the worshippers not to be lazy, "for laziness is a sin. A lazy person is like a dog begging for food from people. At the conclusion of this Prayer take your hoe and dig with it. Thus you shall live and not need to go and beg for food from people...If the sun is shining - dig.. If it is raining - dig and weed and be on guard (against birds eating the crops)... All lazy ones will be cast away. Their blood will be exacted out of their hands because with their laziness they pour shame on God. God gave them hands for work... They pour shame on God."⁵⁸ It echoes the Wolof saying, 'Yalla, Yalla! Bei sa toll' ('Instead of shouting, God, God! till your land.') Neither the murmur of magic nor of the millenium⁵⁹ stirs in the otherwise clear tones of that stern admonishment. Man shall not live by the Spirit at all if he neglects the provisions of nature.

It is consistent with the nature of the indigenous epistemology that a 'practical theory' of life be developed. With its introduction at this stage of our exposition we may consider the paper completed. However a brief recapitulation of the significance of new religious movements for the reform and modernization of African societies should be attempted in conclusion. The theoretical issue of professional specialization in religion has practical consequences for modernization. The existence of a specialized religious sphere has pointed to a contrasting sphere for politics and worldly affairs. This encourages secularization, but it also inhibits the notion of an omniscient state. It brings into being a pluralist world where diversity of life-styles and vocation may exist simultaneously. It is, of course, not new to Africa, for historical chronicles concerned with mediaeval Africa describe the tradition as full-fledged in those times. But the reassertion of this tradition in an era that

has witnessed the growth of statism in Africa should have new significance. The widow of Efon, even in her enfeebled corner, is right to protest at the aggressive intrusiveness of modernity, for when the spirit of protest is silent under such provocation greater evil might result. The eminent Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1807-1891) expressed this sentiment in one of its earliest forms, and he should have the final word. He reminded people that Christianity had not come to destroy national assimilation and, having in mind the colonial government of the time, he went on: "while we render unto all their dues, we may regard it our bounden duty to stand firm in rendering to God the things that are God's."⁶⁰

NOTES

- ¹ Robin Horton: "African Conversion", Africa, vol. XLI, no. 2, April, 1971, 85-108.
- ² Caroline Ifeka-Moller: "White Power: Social Structural Factors in Conversion to Christianity, Eastern Nigeria: 1921-1966", Canadian Journal of African Studies, vol.8, no.1, 55-72.
- ³ Humphrey Fisher called attention to the Muslim dimension in response to Horton's article. Fisher: "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa", Africa, vol. XLIII, no.1, January, 1973, 27-40. Horton replied at some length and in strident fashion in: "On the Rationality of Conversion", Part I, Africa, vol. XLV, no.3, 1975, 219-235, and Part II, Vol.XLV, no.4, 1975, 373-399.
- ⁴ S.R. Charsley: "Dreams in an Independent African Church", vol.XLIII, no.3, July, 1973, 244-257, Africa.
- ⁵ Monica Wilson: Communal Rituals of the Nyakusa, Oxford, 1959, 134-139, and E.E. Evans-Pritchard. Nuer Religion, Oxford, 1956, rep. 1974, 22-27. Also see: Lamin Sanneh: The Jakhanke: The History of an Islamic Clerical People of Senegambia, London, 1979, 185-213 for examples from Muslim tradition.
- ⁶ Harold W. Turner: Religious Innovation in Africa, Boston, 1979, 12-13.
- ⁷ R. S. O'Fahey: State and Society in Dār Fūr, London, 1980, 115-130 for Dār Fūr as an example.
- ⁸ Victor Turner in a Foreword to Bennetta Jules-Rosette: African Apostles: Ritual and Conversion in the Church of John Maranke, Ithaca, 1975, p.8.
- ⁹ C.G. Oosthuizen: Post-Christianity in Africa, London, 1968, and comments on it in Richard Gray's review article, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, vol.XLIII, Part 2, 1980, 415; and Bengt Sundkler: Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists, London, 1976, 190-92, 204n, 306, 328.

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¹⁰Matthew Schoffeleers: "The History and Political Role of the M'bona Cult among the Mang'anja", Terence O. Ranger and I.N. Kimambo, eds.: The Historical Study of African Religion, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1972.

¹¹John D. Y. Peel: Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba, London, 1968, 70.

¹²Peel, 1968, 94.

¹³Sundkler, 1976, 83.

¹⁴Sundkler, 1976, 82.

¹⁵Sundkler, 1976, 124.

¹⁶Sundkler, 1976, 125.

¹⁷Sundkler, 1976, 291.

¹⁸Sundkler, 1976, 171.

¹⁹Idem.

²⁰Sundkler, 1976, 84.

²¹Sundkler, 1976, 221.

²²Idem.

²³Sundkler: Bantu Prophets in South Africa, London, 1964, 239.

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²⁴Sundkler, 1964, 239.

²⁵Sundkler, 1964, 240.

²⁶Text of Address in Godfrey N. Brown and Mervyn Hiskett, eds.: Conflict and Harmony in Education in Tropical Africa, London, 1975, 467-471.

²⁷The concept of the 'stirring of the waters' (see John 5) was widely used in theological circles in the 1960s to refer to the confidence with which modern man was proceeding to bring down the Ptolemaic scaffolding with the help of the Copernican revolution, a step that would, it was believed, sweep away the remnants of traditional authority. I use the phrase here to indicate a kind of unsettling which comes about from the impact of modernity on traditional societies without implying that change has to involve a radical rupture. In his influential book, From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process, Doubleday, New York, 1957 (first published 1940), William F. Albright expounds the thesis of epochal shifts as characteristic of the general history of culture. He says: "When one culture yields to another there is nearly always (probably always under simple conditions) an abrupt change, a true mutation of culture, in which a generation may suffice for changes which might otherwise take a millenium to effect...a culture may last for centuries with only the slightest modification, after which there is a sudden interruption in its continuity, accompanied by changes so rapid that it is often hard...to distinguish the successive steps." Pp.123-124. It is debatable whether as a general theory historical change obliterates so successfully all traces of earlier epochs.

²⁸Sundkler, 1964, 205.

²⁹Sundkler, 1964, 204.

³⁰Sundkler, 1964, 205-206.

³¹One Zulu public leader declared in 1958: "As from 1913 we knew one thing - there is no God with the White man." Sundkler, 1976, 311.

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³²Sundkler, 1976, 81.

³³Harold W. Turner, 1979, 225-230.

³⁴E.A. Ritter: Shaka Zulu, London, 1955, rep. 1972.

³⁵Sundkler, 1976, 97-98.

³⁶Sundkler, 1976, 109-110.

³⁷Sundkler, 1976, 111.

³⁸Sundkler, 1976, 203.

³⁹Marie-Louise Martin: Kimbangu: An African Prophet and His Church, Oxford (Blackwell) 1975.

⁴⁰Godwin Tasie: Christian Missionary Enterprise in the Niger Delta: 1864-1918, Leiden, 1978, 166-201; Harold W. Turner, 1979, 133-145.

⁴¹G.M. Haliburton: The Prophet Harris, London, 1971; John D. Hargreaves: France and West Africa: An Anthology of Historical Documents, London, 1969, 247-252. A three-volume study of Harris was completed recently, though still unpublished: David A. Shank: A Prophet of Modern Times: The Thought of William Wadé Harris, Aberdeen, 1980.

⁴²Phillippe Élebé Lisembé: "The Role of Kimbanguism in the Development of the Self-awareness of the Zaire Nation:", in Christian and Islamic Contributions Towards Establishing Independent States in Africa South of the Sahara, Africa Colloquium, Bonn-Bad Godesberg, 1979, published in Stuttgart by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations of the Federal Republic of Germany. The quote is from p.153.

⁴³Phillippe Élebé Lisembé, 1979, 150.

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- ⁴⁴Diakanua Ndofunso: "The Role of Prayer in the Kimbanguist Church", in Christianity in Independent Africa, eds. E. Fasholé-Luke, Richard Gray et al, London and Bloomington, 1978, 580.
- ⁴⁵Dr David Livingstone: Expedition to the Zambezi, London (John Murray), 1865, 64.
- ⁴⁶Dr David Livingstone: Missionary Travels, cited in Godfrey Lienhardt: Social Anthropology, Oxford, 1966, 142.
- ⁴⁷Richard Jobson: The Golden Trade or a Discovery of the River Gambia, 1620-21, London, 1623.
- ⁴⁸Christopher Fyfe: A History of Sierra Leone, London, 1962, 526.
- ⁴⁹John Peterson: The Province of Freedom, Evanston and London, 1969, 266.
- ⁵⁰Sundkler, 1976, 115.
- ⁵¹John Peel, 1968, 58.
- ⁵²John Peel, 1968, 58-59.
- ⁵³John Peel, 1968, 59-60.
- ⁵⁴Harold W. Turner: History of an Independent African Church: Church of the Lord (Aladura), Oxford, 1967.
- ⁵⁵Ibn Khaldun: al-Muqaddimah, 3 vols., tr. & ed. Franz Rosenthal, Princeton, 1967, II, 267.
- ⁵⁶Sundkler, 1976, 127.

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⁵⁷ Sundkler, 1976, 179.

⁵⁸ Idem.

⁵⁹ Reference is intended to the wellknown book, Magic and the Millenium by Bryan R. Wilson. The sub-title of this book reveals the author's methodology: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples. Published in the United States by Harper & Row, New York, 1973.

⁶⁰ J.F.A. Ajayi: Christian Missions in Nigeria: 1841-1891: The Making of a New Elite. London and Evanston, 1965 and 1969, 224.